

CHAPTER 72
PUBLIC ASSISTANCE
FRONT END INVESTIGATIONS

481—72.1(10A) Definitions.

“Client” means any person who has made an application for or is receiving public assistance from the department of human services (hereafter known as DHS).

“Collateral contact” means a reliable source other than the client knowledgeable about information relative to pertinent public assistance case factors.

“Department” means the Iowa department of inspections and appeals.

“Overpayment” means the dollar amount of public assistance specified by DHS rules which is subject to recovery.

“Pertinent public assistance case factors” means information considered necessary by DHS to verify the household composition, income and assets on referred cases.

“Public assistance” means the family investment program, food stamps, medical assistance, state supplementary assistance and refugee cash assistance.

“Referral” means a request to investigate pertinent public assistance case factors on error-prone cases. The request shall be made by DHS for help from the department on the referral for front end investigation form.

“Refusal to cooperate” by client means the client has failed to attend a scheduled interview without prior notification to the investigator, or to provide information, or to assist in the gathering of information about pertinent public assistance case factors with the department investigator.

481—72.2(10A) Referrals. Client-caused errors in public assistance benefits arise primarily from three areas: household composition, income and assets. A flexible list of error-prone indicators in those three areas has been identified. One or more indicators must be present for a referral to the department investigator. A current copy is available from the Department of Inspections and Appeals, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0083.

The department investigator is responsible for investigating referrals to:

1. Determine whether information supplied to DHS by the client is complete and correct regarding pertinent public assistance case factors;
2. Serve as a deterrent against benefit issuance resultant from fraudulent applications submitted by DHS clients;
3. Identify client-caused overpayments for recovery;
4. Assist in reducing public assistance program error rates.

481—72.3(10A) Investigation procedures. Procedures for investigations may include, but are not limited to, the following steps:

72.3(1) The department investigators shall inform the client of their involvement in the client’s case by sending an introductory letter.

72.3(2) Client information may be verified by using:

- a. Property verification to identify possible property ownership.
- b. Postmaster statement to verify current address.
- c. Motor vehicle information to identify possible vehicle ownership.

72.3(3) If a face-to-face interview is necessary, an appointment letter is sent to the client.

a. Prior to the interview, the client will be informed of the purpose of the investigation, the types of information being investigated, what their responsibilities are in terms of cooperating in the investigation, and the consequences of refusal to cooperate in the investigation.

b. During the interview with the department investigator, the client may be asked to sign a form authorizing the department to contact collateral sources to verify pertinent public assistance case factors. At least one of the following forms will be attached to the authorization:

- (1) Landlord questionnaire,
- (2) Mortgage questionnaire,
- (3) Earned income questionnaire,
- (4) Financial institution questionnaire,
- (5) General questionnaire.

c. The client shall be provided a copy of the signed authorization form and any other forms identified as necessary at the time of the interview. The authorization form and attached form(s) will be explained during the interview and are offered as a courtesy to the client. The client-signed authorization is not required for a department investigator to secure collateral information related to pertinent public assistance case factors.

d. The director of the department or the director's designee may issue subpoenas in order to secure data that is deemed pertinent public assistance case factor information.

72.3(4) The DHS client file may be reviewed by the department investigator.

72.3(5) Collateral contacts will be used to collect information by the department investigator. The information supplied by the client may be subject to further verification by the department investigator.

72.3(6) The director of the department or the director's designee shall determine that all investigations conducted by the department investigator are related to pertinent public assistance case factors.

72.3(7) If the client has previously received public assistance benefits and a discrepancy(s) is present, the investigation may continue to determine whether an overissuance of benefits has been made. However, clients who have never received benefits and withdraw their application or are denied benefits will not be subject to continued investigation.

481—72.4(10A) Findings. The department investigator shall report and provide documentation of the findings of the investigation, including client noncooperation, to DHS using the transmittal A form. The department's investigation is closed upon submission of the transmittal A form to the referral source and cannot be reopened prior to the receipt of a new or updated referral for front end investigation form.

DHS shall report the case action taken and any determination of overpayment or intentional program violation referral to the department using the transmittal B form. All decisions about DHS public assistance eligibility will be made by DHS. The client will need to clarify any discovered discrepancies with DHS. Refusal to cooperate will result in DHS taking action to deny or cancel public assistance benefits. Future public assistance application(s) will not be considered for approval until cooperation with the department investigator is completed. The department investigator shall comply with all laws, rules and regulations with respect to confidentiality.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code sections 10A.104(5), 10A.104(6), 10A.105, 10A.402(7), 17A.3(1)“*b*,” and 22.11.

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